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FROM RM ASSISTANT SECRETARY BRADFORD R. HIGGINS

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SUBJECT: FY - 2010 MISSION STRATEGIC PLAN (MSP) AWARDS

1. I am pleased to announce the winners of the MSP Award for the FY - 2010 cycle. The regional bureaus nominated high quality MSPs for consideration which were reviewed by an RM/SPP review committee that addressed specific strengths and shortcomings of each nominated MSP using a standardized set of criteria.

2. The FY - 2010 MSP award goes to Costa Rica, with Tajikistan as first runner up. Nepal and China receive honorable mention.

3. The criteria used to judge the MSPs included: (1) the summary effectiveness of the Chief of Mission (COM) and Foreign Assistance Priorities statements; (2) the succinctness and coherence of the mission goals, and linkage to the COM statement; (3) the resource table linkage with the goals; and (4) the overall persuasiveness of the MSP.

4. The MSP produced by mission Costa Rica has several particular strengths. The COM statement was well organized, and clearly explained the U.S. vision in country for FY - 2010, how post plans to achieve that vision, and provided good justifications for the new resources requested. Additionally, the COM Statement included strong ties to the MSP goal papers. The MSP incorporated good use of strategies with ties to creative indicators. The foreign assistance section of Costa Rica's MSP was an excellent description of how it would use its foreign assistance resources in support of the mission's overall objectives. It provided strong arguments for what it could accomplish if its preferred budget was approved and what initiatives it would scale back, and why, if it were only allowed its "control" request. While many missions did this, Costa Rica excelled in the use of past performance information to demonstrate how changes in the budget would affect their ability to achieve the objectives that they had put forth.

5. Tajikistan's Chief of Mission Statement demonstrated a novel approach in outlining the mission's "Future Outlook" which described the country's trajectory for each goal. Tajikistan's goal paper descriptions outlined clear and specific tactics and effectively utilized high level contextual indicators.

6. Over the coming MSP cycle, RM/SPP looks forward to working with missions and bureaus to improve MSPs even further. Efforts are still needed in the areas of internal coherence and consistency, as well as in the use of indicators that focus on outcomes and that incorporate targets that include links to USG and Mission programs and activities.

7. I extend hearty congratulations to Missions Costa Rica and Tajikistan and thank the many posts that submitted high quality MSPs. In addition, I thank the regional bureaus for the high level of support provided to posts during the preparation and review process. Funding for the MSP Awards will be addressed after the FY - 2009 financial Plan is finalized.

8. Minimize considered.

